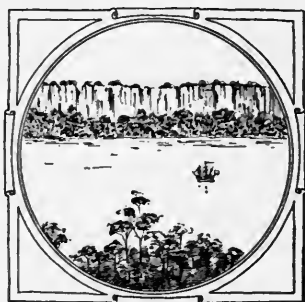




# THE HUDSON & OTHER POEMS

BY

GEORGE S. HELLMAN



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TO  
GEOFFREY AND RHODA  
AND  
THEIR MOTHER

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## NOTE

Of these poems some have been printed in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, *The Cosmopolitan*, *The Argonaut*, *East and West*, *The Ethical Record*, *The Columbia Literary Monthly*, *The Morningside*, and in the following three anthologies: *The American Anthology*, edited by Edmund Clarence Stedman, *The World's Best Poetry*, edited by Bliss Carman, and *The Chief American Poets*, edited by Curtis Hidden Page.



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## THE HUDSON

WHERE in its old historic splendor stands  
The home of England's far-famed Parliament,  
And waters of the Thames in calm content  
At England's fame flow slowly o'er their sands;  
And where the Rhine past vine-entwinèd lands  
Courses in castled beauty, there I went;  
And far to southern rivers flower-besprent,  
And to the icy streams of northern strands.

Then mine own native shores I trod once more,  
And, gazing on thy waters' majesty,  
The memory, O Hudson, came to me  
Of one who went to seek the wide world o'er  
For love; but found it not. Then home turned he  
And saw his mother waiting at the door.

## SONG

Do the mountains query  
Whence our beauteous trees?  
Do the waves make question  
The glory of the seas?  
Do the skies insist on  
The stars' bright mystery?  
Shall I seek to fathom  
The love I bear to thee?



## “DEAREST, WHEN THE WINDS OF SPRING”

DEAREST, when the winds of Spring  
Kiss the buds to blossoming,  
Well it is our hearts are gay,  
Dancing like the lilac-spray.

Every year it blooms anew—  
But *one* Spring for me and you.  
Let us make the most of May:  
Past, she comes no more our way.

## MULTUM IN PARVO

THE sea-shell's faint-heard murmuring  
Unto the poet's ear can bring  
The rapture of the radiant sea  
And all its glistening melody.

Borne by the north-wind's bitter breath  
Unto its fragrant bed of death  
This oak-leaf fluttering wan and sear  
Is sentient with the dying year.

Within one dauntless far-flung word  
The voice of myriads may be heard;  
A woodland violet holds fast  
The spirit of all springtimes past.

The thoughts that we eternal call—  
A single life contains them all;  
And joy and sorrow, hope and fear  
Lie close impearled within a tear.

## SYMPATHY

YE all may join her laughter—  
Partake her hours of bliss.  
If sorrow follow after  
Let me alone share this.

Yes, all of you may languish  
When, joyous, she is fair.  
Give me her tears of anguish  
And silence of despair.

## ON THE DEATH OF A LITTLE CHILD

PASSIONLESS ravisher of land and main,  
Grim wielder of the Damocletian sword,  
Thou stern negation stronger than the horde  
Of towering warriors led by Tamerlane,  
Thou overreacher of the craftiest brain  
And final arbiter at every board,  
O sole unconquerable and puissant lord,  
Unmoved by pleasure and untouched by pain,—  
Could'st thou not pass such easy conquest by ;  
Ay, raped all roses from the breast of earth,  
And orisons of larks hushed in mid-sky,  
And breathed oblivion o'er a city's mirth  
To prove thy prowess? But this little child  
Who trusting looked upon thy face and smiled!

## SAN FRANCISCO

(*April 18, 1906*)

O FATEFUL dawn, destruction in thy train,  
O fearful day when nature drew the key  
That set the elemental furies free,  
O night of death, come ye not thus again!  
A little while ago and she did reign  
The hill-throned Empress of the Western Sea—  
Her sceptre now is fallen; misery  
Her mantle, and her cruel crown is pain.

Ye strange Titanic forces past control,  
Shall we bow down in fear, a weakling race?  
Well can the earthquake from its buttressed place  
A fortress hurl, but not the human soul;  
And unto them who staunchly suffer, fate  
Shall not avail to bar life's Golden Gate.

## COLERIDGE

THINE is the mystic melody,  
The far-off murmur of some dreamland sea  
Lifting throughout the night,  
Up to the moon's mild light,  
Waves silver-lustrous, silvery-white,  
That beat in rhythm on the shadowy shore,  
And burst in music, and are seen no more.

## LINES

GONE are the snows of yester-year,  
Withered the rose that blossomed here,  
And the heart is cold that once beat high.  
Yet earth is more fair for last year's snows,  
And sweeter the air where once bloomed the rose,  
And dead hopes live in memory.

## THE CONFESSIONAL

(THE WOMAN SPEAKS)

FATHER CONFESSOR, with weight of sin I come.  
Bend nearer still thine ear compassionate.  
Shame wellnigh seals my lips to leave them dumb,  
Yet must I speak. Christ's tender love is great,  
And He will save—if it be not too late.

Thou art aware what woman whispers here,  
Her voice familiar through confessions heard;  
Oft in her sorrow thou hast known to cheer;  
And grateful is she for each flaming word  
That her discouraged heart with courage stirred.

When last in deep perplexity she knelt,  
"Be true unto thyself nor be afraid"—  
Thus didst thou bless with counsel, and I felt  
As one who pierces to a sunlit glade,  
Beyond the tangled forest's doubtful shade.



My life hath been a sea without a shore,  
And harborless my soul a drifting bark.  
The winds of sorrow ever smote it more,  
And I grew weak with striving, nor could mark  
A single star to guide me through the dark.

He that should have been pilot of my soul  
And found the haven of our joint delight,  
Was all intent upon another goal:  
My lordly husband, reckless of my plight,  
Made night a desert for me, and day night.

Enamored of the soft caress of gold,  
Impassioned by seductive lure of power,  
How could o'er him my fading beauty hold  
Its sovereignty of the bridal hour  
Or win him back to love's deserted bower?

Unceasingly we drifted far apart,  
Our ways divided by ambition's dream  
Wherein was planned no place for my poor heart,  
Though pearl-embroidered costumes he would scheme  
To deck his puppet wife. Ah, it doth seem

A hideous paradox, satire, what you will,  
That men should barter golden love for gloss,  
And plot with cunning mind and strenuous will  
To lose life's treasure in exchange for dross,  
And all the while exultant in their loss

Had I but borne him children, then perchance  
Life had not proved as fruitless as my womb.  
They had increased his pride of circumstance  
And, some day, carved his titles on his tomb:  
But barren women must abide in gloom,

Unless, ah God, unless love's quenchless rays  
Pour with redoubled light from lips and eyes;  
In speech of comfort through desponding days,  
And sympathy of silence when arise  
Unuttered grief's unutterable cries.

I sorrowed without solace, and grew wild,  
Till, roaming in imagination's hell  
Wherein each mother strove to find her child.  
(In vain, and I among them,) faint I fell,  
Encircled by despair's relentless spell;

(All in a dream of anguish,) to awake  
From a deep swoon of bliss-commingled pain,  
And hear a blessed voice that said, "Forsake  
The realms of bitter thoughts, nor tread again  
The stones envenomed of a loveless lane."

Was it the whisper of a woodland bird  
Warbling above in lyric-throated bliss,  
Or symphony of seraphim, dim heard  
Through struggling sleep? All that I know is this:  
I woke from slumber, on my lips a kiss,

And o'er me gently bending was a form,  
Whereat I leaped to life in sweet surprise;  
As a poor mariner, wrestling with the storm,  
Sees suddenly the coast where safety lies,  
So fell my gaze upon thy love-lit eyes!

Nay, dearest of confessors, do not start!  
Forbearing hear me till my story end.  
I come not now to tempt thee with my heart  
I wish no lover, but I need a friend,  
Whom in His mercy may Lord Jesus send!

So to resume:—Long weeks my lonely mind  
Had fed itself with visions of thy grace;  
Mine unkind husband made thee still more kind.  
Be it confessed, of late I sought this place  
To still my yearning for thy lovèd face.

When first the truth confronted, I denied,  
And named it Satan, and with passion strove  
To drown the voice of love whene'er it cried,  
Until at last I knew that far above  
My poor opposing power rose my love.

The ramparts of my will in ruin lay  
By the insidious victor overthrown.  
Ah, glorious anguish of that happy day!  
It seemed the sun with added radiance shone  
When love triumphant came into his own.

Straightway in passionate words I bared my soul,  
To honor heedless and to danger blind;  
Then to thy sacristy at twilight stole  
Softly as moonbeams, swiftly as the wind,  
And left my words where none but thou should'st find.

Undoubting that my ardor would inflame  
Even thy priestly heart, and by its power  
Evoke like passion, fool, I dared to name,  
The secret pathway, and the silent hour  
When I should welcome thee within my bower.

So when last night the palpitating chimes  
Announced the moment of expected bliss  
(It seemed eternity till eleven times  
The bells rang forth,) all life resolved to this:  
Shall the world cease before I feel his kiss?

The echoes died away and, like a pall  
Over a coffin, sombre silence fell.  
Long stayed I crouching by the garden wall  
But still thou cam'st not. Ah, what words can tell  
The burning passion of a soul in hell?

At last, with weary footsteps, sad and slow,  
Like pale-eyed sisters from their cloister came  
The hours of dawn; I watched them come and go,  
Until upon my misery and my shame  
The rising sun relentless cast his flame.

Then went I to my chamber, hating thee,  
Myself, mine husband, and all things that are.  
I loathed earth's green, the blueness of the sea;  
Insane I raged at sun and moon and star,  
Wildly with all creation waging war;

Till from His crucifix upon my wall  
With eyes of pity Lord Christ gazed on me—  
With loving eyes that comprehended all—  
Pity more boundless than the boundless sea,  
And love more deep than my deep misery.

O holy mystery of the perfect God  
Who for the sin of men was crucified  
Suffering the Roman soldier's thornèd rod,  
The spike of hatred in His quivering side,  
Until, a deathless deity, He died!

Heart-broken still, yet with new strength of mind  
I rose transformed by His compassionate gaze,  
Resolved to seek submissive and to find  
Some vestige of the faith of maiden days  
Wherewith to guide my steps in duty's ways.

And as I knelt in prayer and sought for aid  
Three thoughts like messengers from heaven sped,  
Peace harbingers to me, and undismayed  
To follow God's strong hand where'er it led,  
I rose from kneeling by mine unslept bed.

To Him whose deeds all other works transcend  
I thought how gratitude I best might show;  
I thought how lovingless it were to blend  
The shameful mire of my passions low  
With thy priest's sanctity's undriven snow.

I thought how he my husband proudly gave  
His honor to my guard, without commands,—  
An ancient trust of heritage that brave  
Dead men and women died for in far lands,  
Bequeathing it unstained into my hands.

And now I come to claim the missive sent,  
Mute witness of my momentary shame  
(If yet thou hast not burnt it); to repent  
The jeopardy wherein I placed thy fame  
And mine own lineage's unspotted name;

And most of all to thank thee<sup>e</sup> who didst save  
Me from myself by purity's avail;  
Who wouldst not grant the sin that I did crave,  
Servant of God, to leave me rent and frail,  
A miserable wreck by passion's gale.

So ends confession. I had asked more soon  
My letter of thee, but I wished to tell  
My piteous tale the whole, ere yet this boon,  
Granted by thee, should token all is well  
And I am saved by Lord Christ's miracle.

Thou draw'st it from thy sleeve. I mark my crest.  
Thanks beyond words! I hear the angels sing!  
Now I shall clasp forgiveness to my breast!  
How thine hand trembles!—God, my husband's ring!  
\* \* \* \* \*  
Well, serpent, I am ready for thy sting!

(THE MAN SPEAKS)

Thine husband's ring upon thine husband's hand,  
Thine husband's hand that slew the traitor priest,  
Whose soul flames forth in Hell, a noisome brand  
Flourished by Satan laughing! So that beast  
Stalks forth no more unto his carnal feast!



How I thy letter captured, let that be.  
I tripped his heels with lustful fire shod  
Swift to the meeting, by the lilac tree,  
Our gateway's glory; and my sword, a rod,  
Chastened the traitor's insolence to God.

His mummer's garb I stripped, myself to wear  
The vestments of hypocrisy; to weigh  
The sum of the affront I lived to bear;  
Learn, as confessor, whether I should stay  
The stroke of honor mine own wife to slay.

(THE WOMAN SPEAKS)

Lay bare the blade, and sheathe it in my breast!  
No syllable of love do I deny.  
Who weakly played his part now lies at rest;  
But not so weakly playing, soon shall I.  
I ask no pardon of thee. Let me die.

(THE MAN SPEAKS)

But I of thee ask pardon. Hadst thou heard,  
My silent voice in this confessional hour!  
Each breath I drew a deep repentant word,  
Each thought a seed which thou mightst cause to flower  
In deed of virtue by thy wifeness's power.

By mine own tyranny a shackled slave  
Unto my meaner nature I have grown.  
Whilst thou, escaping from the threatening wave  
Fed by my streams of selfishness, alone  
Can stamp the seeds of sin that I have sown.

He who forgot himself, forget thou him.  
Thou hast escaped the charring of love's flame,  
For, like the voice of holy seraphim  
When God's own Son into His kingdom came,  
I heard thee speak the honor of our name.

Be thou confessor; me, the penitent,  
Absolve by pity, if not yet by love.  
Impose whate'er thou wilt, I am content.  
There is no obstacle but I will move  
My newborn soul's sincerity to prove.

Promise me naught. But, infinite desire,  
Rich guerdon of brave deeds, thy love again  
May flame with light of its once wonted fire,  
Sunrise and morning to me! So the pain  
That, wildly foaming, floods my heart, shall wane.

Thou giv'st thine hand! Behold, with reverence,  
I take it before God; my vision clear  
Of all its former mists. Come, let us hence.  
Hark to the herald voice of chanticleer,  
Proclaiming earth's new day, our life's new year!

## A CHALLENGE

THINK you to shatter these high rocks, O Sea,  
That thus you strike in wrath?  
The firm crag rising o'er you fearlessly  
A truer splendor hath.

Think you to shatter man's high hopes, O Fate,  
That thus you deal forth pain?  
Know that alone the dauntless are the great.  
Strike, if you will, again!

## IN A STREET CAR

PUT down your paper for a space  
And let the evening's news go by;  
Here in this swift-wheeled meeting place  
The *living* pages open lie.  
Your neighbor who doth closely scan  
With hawk-like eye the day's finance  
Betrays the avaricious man,  
The insatiate votary of chance.

Beside him, conscious of her dress,  
Its laces and its furbelows,  
A girl with alien tenderness  
Holds to her face a purer rose.  
But you, with reverential gaze,  
May mark the mystery of race  
In yonder woman's careful ways  
And pale, incipient mother's face;  
Or pierce with sharp indignant look  
Beneath the lofty vulgar stare  
This awkward, ill-kempt workman took  
In brushing 'gainst that millionaire.  
Two children, the day's lessons done,  
Chatter and laugh in boisterous wise;  
Youth's unpremeditated fun  
Is leaping in their sparkling eyes.  
What know they of our elder care,  
Of searèd heart, and furrowed brow?  
Time is not yet when they must share  
Knowledge of grief as we do now.

## ON FINDING AN OLD LOCKET

ONCE searching at my leisure,  
(The thing I sought was pleasure)  
Amid an endless measure  
Of trinkets worn and old,

I found a locket lying  
Just where the sun's rays, dying,  
Made possible my spying  
The battered piece of gold.

A fair young face, a flower  
Perchance from some dim bower  
Where, in a long gone hour,  
Love, youth, and life had reigned;

These, and some words intended  
For one whose dust long blended  
With other dust, life ended,  
These only it contained.

Ah, sweet young maid, forever  
Gone, where all high endeavor  
Of brave and strong and clever  
Meets with its end at last,

With love thine eyes are beaming  
So that their love-light gleaming  
Makes death itself seem seeming;  
Thy life cannot be past!

And yet, the words' dim tracing  
Show how the years, swift chasing,  
Have sped, the all-erasing,  
And prove thy life is o'er;

But what thine eyes betoken  
Will be a charm unbroken,  
Till the last word be spoken,  
And mankind is no more.

## LOQUITUR MORS

### DEATH

BEHOLD me, face to face, you who have uttered  
Unchallenged vaunts of unconcernèd soul,  
Whose dauntless heart with fear hath never fluttered  
Whatever shadows o'er life's pathway stole.  
Tell me, my friend, is now your courage steady?

### THE MAN

As this strong rock, whereby you lean your spear.  
Day I have loved, but for the night am ready;  
Open night's gate; I follow without fear.

### DEATH

For you the sun hath for the last time risen,  
Nor shall your sightless eyes behold it set.  
No windows look from my eternal prison;  
Starlight and moonlight have not reached it yet.  
The golden foliage of the woodland places,  
The glorious leapings of the unleashed sea,  
Your lovèd mountains' kindly, rugged faces  
For you have been, but never are to be.



The gentle budding of sweet verdant valleys  
Thrilled by the herald note of Spring's first bird,  
Where you have quaffed new strength from  
Nature's chalice—  
Irrevocably lost.

### THE MAN

Yes, I am stirred,  
Stirred to far depths, O Death, I will confess it,  
Beauty was ever boundless balm to me.  
Grief now is mine, yet how shall fear redress it,  
Or from your vaults prove open sesame?  
I bid my last farewell unto creation  
Who well have fared amidst its sounds and sights,  
Grateful for lordly moments of elation,  
And draughts deep drunk of all its sweet delights.

### DEATH

How of your mind that overleaped all spaces,  
Unchecked by bar of time and orb of star,  
Consorting with the gods in their high places,  
Embracing visions of a world afar?  
For winding worms and little loathsome lizards  
Your skull shall prove a comfortable nest;  
Your aspirations, like confounded wizards,  
Shall vanish into naught at my behest.

Through endless æons no Promethean fire  
Shall light anew your ever-blinded eyes;  
All dreams of wisdom and all joy's desire  
Dissolved to dust. How now?

THE MAN

He dies who dies.

DEATH

And yet no fear?

THE MAN

At what shall I be frightened?

In all that you have said I am well versed,  
Thus neither overcast nor yet enlightened  
By these stern truths your grim voice has rehearsed.  
Try then no more. Contented with your power  
Make ending to this parley. Take your dead.  
Eternal time shall lack the final hour  
To bring to you the tribute of my dread.

DEATH

One moment more. I grant you wisdom, beauty,  
And all the pleasures clustering in their train,  
Ambitious hopes, and high commands of duty—  
Their memory I have invoked in vain.

Still stand you dauntless, still his quest is bootless  
Who, ere he breaks you, wills that you should bend;  
A half-won triumph were a triumph fruitless.

#### THE MAN

I wait your blow.

#### DEATH

It comes. We near the end.

Bethink you of the fairest and the dearest  
Whose love gave perfume to your flower of life;  
Who, miles asunder, still your heart lay nearest,  
And made divine the common name of wife.  
No more her smiles, her kiss, her dear caresses;  
No more the answering hand that in yours stole;  
Sweet parted lips on lips, sun-kissèd tresses,  
And pure communion of soul with soul.

#### THE MAN

O cruel Death!

#### DEATH

Say now, am I the master?  
Confess to fear that you must go alone.  
She who has shared each joy and each disaster  
Finds blocked the journey by your burial stone.

## THE MAN

O cruel Death, your words a path of anguish  
Cleave through my loving longing heart anew.  
Let me no further in my misery languish.  
'T is love o'erwhelms me. Not the fear of you.

## DEATH

Your valor likes me. Many a laurelled hero,  
Victors of cities, winners of world fame,  
The Macedonian Philip, Roman Nero,  
Showed not more courage when they heard my name.  
But though you do not quail at the decision  
Which doth decree the riving from your love,  
Conjure, my friend, this not all-pleasing vision:  
When you lie dead below, and she above  
Treads all unguarded through life's darkening places  
Until she nears me at the road's drear end,  
Bereft of strength from loved familiar faces;  
I leer upon her; close my features bend;  
She calls upon you, but your voice is silent—  
She gropes for your warm hand, but it is dust. . . .

*(The man leaps forward and seizes the spear of Death)*

## DEATH

Presumptuous man, would you with Death be violent?  
None knows but I the secret of that thrust.

*(The man falls back dead)*

## DEATH

*(Bending over him)*

The fatal touch of my all-fateful spear!  
And yet I know not if I taught him fear.

## ARTHUR TRENT

A CURIOUS man was Arthur Trent;  
His neighbors called him taciturn;  
By all the villagers' consent  
Unheeded quite he came and went;  
Their ways a livelihood to earn  
With smiling calm he seemed to spurn.  
'T was natural that they should resent  
The silent insolence of Trent.

One morn they found him in his bed,  
A lovely smile upon his face.  
"Well, the poor vagabond is dead,  
'T is not much loss. God grant him grace."  
Then, for the day was somewhat sped,  
Each hurried to his working place.

But when the village children heard  
That shiftless Arthur Trent had died  
All little hearts were strangely stirred,  
And parents wondered why they cried.

And as each child, so every bird  
That fluttered near the village square  
Seemed waiting for the absent word  
To lure them through the lazy air.

And one that lived a life apart—  
Anathema upon her name—  
Who felt his sympathetic heart  
O'erleap the barriers of her shame,  
The bitter blast of wintry snows  
Still ventures, wreath in hand, to brave;  
And every summer day a rose  
She gently places on his grave.

## LULLABY

CLOUDS are ships that sail on high  
Across the blue sea of the sky;

*Sleep, dear baby, sleep.*

Every cloud that rides the gale  
Hides an angel 'neath its sail,  
And the little angels keep  
Guard above you as you sleep,

*Sleep, dear baby, sleep.*

When the veils of night arise  
And dim the little angels' eyes,

*Sleep, dear baby, sleep;*

Still your mother is at hand  
While you roam in slumberland.

Deeper than the sea is deep,  
Her love guards you as you sleep,

*Sleep, dear baby, sleep*



## TO A LITTLE CHILD

THOUGH they grant me fame whose measure  
Shall stretch from deathless birth,  
Though they give me gold and treasure  
Voiding the mines of earth,  
They can not give me such pleasure  
As you with your loving mirth.

No, they have not the power  
To yield deep joy like this,  
That bids faith once more tower  
O'er doubt's forlorn abyss,  
And makes the whole world flower  
In a child's spontaneous kiss.

## WORDSWORTH

LONG, Wordsworth, have I missed thy beauty, long  
Have looked on all thy verse as barren prose  
Where Morals and Philosophy arose  
To prate of truth and wisdom, right and wrong.  
Melodious music, lyric burst of song—  
The gladsome offspring of the poet's throes—  
I found them not, but went as one who goes  
Blinded by light unseen because too strong.

The light which erstwhile dazzled now grows clear:  
Philosopher and poet are akin:  
Both look without on nature and within  
On man; nor is the gaze in aught austere.  
He whosoe'er will seek at last shall find  
The throbbing heart beneath the sentient mind.

## THE JEST

*A room in the palace. In one corner a DUKE, several lords and ladies are talking gaily. On a sofa the KING is reclining, lazily stroking a spaniel. Standing near by is the JESTER, deep in thought. Every now and then he looks up, with a strange expression in his eyes, at the DUKE in the further corner.*

THE KING (*yawning*):                      May good Saint Louis  
Curse this storm which so has spoilt our hunt,  
For I am weary grown of doing naught!

[*Perceives the* JESTER.

Ho, ho! What 's this? My merry laughing Jacques,  
So deep in thought! What is there in your mind?  
Some plan wherewith to while away the time  
That hangs so heavy on these fair white hands?

[*The KING holds up his hands, and looks at them languorously.*

THE JESTER:

Nor of your hands, nor of yourself, thought I.  
My mind, O King, was bent on serious things;  
Your place is not with them.

THE KING (*half frowning*):              Forget not, Fool,  
The salt of wit makes us athirst for more,  
But it mislikes us when there 's pepper in 't.

THE DUKE:

The Fool is growing impudent of late.  
Full oft I 've noted it, my liege. 'T is that  
You pamper him too much.

**THE KING:** My lord the Duke  
Presumes too far to criticize the King.

[The KING breaks into a laugh.]

My faith! good sirs, let's change our mood, and smile  
For King and Lord and Fool, all three of us,  
Have let the surly thunder turn us sour  
E'en like a bowl of milk. Come, Jacques, a jest  
To drive away the clouds of our ill mirth.

THE JESTER (*smiling curiously*):

A jest, my liege the King?

**THE KING:** Said I not so, a jest.

THE JESTER (*turning to the DUKE, with the same smile*):

A jest, my lord the Duke?

**THE DUKE:** Why, yes, a jest.

THE KING:

But why asked you the Duke? It should suffice  
That I the bidding made.

THE JESTER:

An't please, my liege,

'T was but the introduction to my jest.

[*The other lords and ladies come nearer, and the JESTER begins:*

There lived in France a mighty Duke who here  
Shall nameless be—the tale remains the same,—  
And in his wide domain where ran a brook  
That like a drunken man swerved in its course  
Until it tumbled o'er some slippery stones  
And fell, there stood a house—the lodge.  
Without its walls in summer, roses bloomed;  
Within, there dwelt a maiden all year through—  
The daughter of the keeper of the game.  
She was as highly bred as lowly born,  
And good as fair, and beautiful as pure.

THE DUKE (*sarcastically*):

The Fool turns poet.

THE JESTER:

The Duke turns pale. Is it to match my mood,  
Since poesy and pallor, people say,  
So often dwell together?

[*The DUKE flushes, but does not answer, and the JESTER continues:*

Elise la bien-aimée,  
Her neighbors called her. Ay, and well beloved  
Was she of all who knew her. But beloved  
The best of a poor jester whom Elise  
Had, on a winter's night, found at her door;  
By cold indifference and the stormy winds  
He had been driven thither hunger-mad,

But not for bread. It was his soul that craved,  
And human kindness was the food it sought.  
Elise, compassion-prompted, bade him come  
And be a welcome guest within her home  
Whene'er he listed thus to spend an hour. . . .  
The Duke, methinks, grows weary of the tale,  
So I will tell as briefly as I may,  
How first a sense of pity made Elise  
Be kind to the poor jester; and how then  
The bond grew stronger till it changed to love  
On her part, as on his.

THE DUKE:

I thought, my liege, we were to hear a jest,  
And not the maudlin tale of some fool's love.

THE JESTER:

If but the Duke will listen to my tale  
Until it end, he will not miss the point.  
(*Aside.*) Nor it, by heaven, him!

[*Continues:*

The neighbors said: "Thou errest, Bien-aimée.  
Thou shouldst have other lover than a fool."  
Then she would smile and answer: "Ah, but love  
Cares not for wisdom, nor for looks nor wealth.  
For it is wiser than all wisdom is;  
More beautiful than beauty's self; more rich  
Than all the kings than ever reigned in France."

[*The JESTER pauses; then continues:*

It chanced, some weeks before the wedding-time,  
The lord of all the lands stopped at the lodge.  
He saw Elise and thought no more that day  
Of hunting stag or boar; for here in truth  
Was nobler game more worthy to be trapped.  
So when the jester reached that night the lodge  
He found Elise in tears. "Ah, dear," spake she,  
"His Grace the Duke has passed this way to-day;  
He has seen fit to speak of love to me.  
He begged me share his power, lands, and wealth,  
And yet he begged me not to share his name;  
So that I knew it was not love he spoke,  
Since love shares all and, with unstinted hand,  
Grows richer in the giving. Yet, what if  
His Grace the Duke doth feel some love for me.  
I care not for it, but for yours alone,  
For yours, for yours!" She wildly threw her arms  
Around the jester who throughout the speech  
Stood rooted to the spot like one who sees  
The walls of Fate, the Grand Inquisitor,  
Close slowly in upon his happiness.  
But when Elise had ceased to speak, a cry  
Burst from the jester's lips, and he did swear  
That neither God above nor Duke below  
Should come between his love and him.—But why,

My lords and ladies, shrink you back? Perchance  
I tell the tale too well and make it seem  
Too realistic for such dainty ears.

If so, then pardon me, wait but a while  
And you shall hear the jest whereof I spoke.  
The fool allowed the torrent of his words  
Full flow, until Elise smiled at his wrath,  
The sad, sweet smile of pitying love, and said:  
"Peace, dear beloved. Go you to the Duke,  
And plead your cause and mine. It may avail;  
For when I tried he almost yielded once,  
Ay, would have yielded, had his gaze not lit  
Upon the cursèd beauty of my face  
As I knelt there before him. But to you  
The Duke may listen with a kindlier ear.  
If you succeed, why then, we 'll live and love;  
And if you fail, this dagger"—here she plucked  
From out his belt the jester's jewelled blade—  
"Shall argue well my cause before the Duke.  
For I am yours, and ever will be yours,  
And only yours." She kissed him tenderly.  
"Go now. God speed you, dear."

[*The storm meanwhile has ceased, and the sun at this point  
breaks forth gloriously from behind some clouds.*

A COURTIER (*interrupting*):

Why see, the storm is over, and the skies



Are turning blue. We yet shall have our hunt!

THE DUKE (*to a lady*):

Let us go forth. The tale is tedious grown.

The point 's too long in coming.

THE JESTER (*barring the passage*):

Wait, my lord!

I bid you wait!

THE DUKE (*angrily*):

What mean you by this, Fool?

I brook no insolence.

THE KING:

Oh, humor him,

That we may sooner hear the jest, my lord.

[*The DUKE bows, and remains standing near the door. The*

*JESTER then continues the tale.*

THE JESTER:

The meanest coward turns at love's behest

Into a hero, and the poorest fool

Becomes a sage. And so, with flaming heart

And cunning mind, he went to seek the Duke.

Amid his followers, gathered round the board

That groaned beneath the weight of wine and meat,

He found him, loud in song. The music ceased

Upon the entrance of the fool, for straight

The Duke divined his errand, and bade fall

Silence! upon the drunken revellers.

"You come, O fool," said he, "propitiously,

For we have sung the songs of wench and wine  
Till our poor lungs pant piteously for rest.”  
The jester answered, thrusting down his fear:  
“My lord, I come with no new tale to tell,  
But with a boon to crave. You know Elise—”  
“Ay, well he does,” broke in a wine-soaked wag,  
“And he will know her better, swear to that!”—  
Unmindful of the laugh that roared around,  
The fool spake on: “I love her, my lord Duke,  
As only he can love who has naught else  
In all the world beside. Have mercy, Duke!  
Say that you will, and my whole life is yours,  
My fealty and heart’s devotion all.  
You who have but to speak, and all of France  
Brings forth her noblest maidens for your choice,  
Will surely spare this one so lowly-born  
Who is the total of my happiness,  
And who loves me as I, my lord, love her.  
What would you gain did you deny our plea?  
A flower without fragrance; ay, a star  
Wherefrom the light is fled, and there remains  
Naught but the soulless body, cold, forlorn.  
For such is maiden, man, or god, or beast,  
Yoked by a bond whose strength lies in aught else  
Than that which love commands. And therefore, Duke,  
Grant this my prayer, and leave Elise to me.”

[*The courtiers and ladies listen intently, for there is a passionate tone in the words of the JESTER as he recounts the tale. The KING looks quizzically at the DUKE, who is still standing near the door, and then turns to the JESTER.*

THE KING (*smiling*):

The feeling, Jacques, you put into these words  
Would, by my faith! near warrant the belief  
They are your own. But come, what said the Duke,  
How answered he the fool's request?

THE JESTER:

Sire, thus:

He waited first until the revellers' mirth  
Had grown less boisterous, and then he spoke.  
"Why laugh you, friends?" said he. "Is it so strange  
That what the fool desires he should seek?  
Or is the well-spring of your mirth stirred up  
By the mere thought that he my rival is?  
A fool 's a man, a fool has rights, my friends,  
E'en though a duke should challenge them. Think  
you

The jingle of the bells upon his cap  
Sounds in the ear of God less musical  
Than tinkle of the crystal goblets here  
Raised high by trembling hands of drunken lords?"  
Then turned he from the revellers to the fool  
And said: "Elise is yours. I give her not,  
For she has given herself. Go say to her

That Dukes of France look not on woman's love  
Or honor as a thing to traffic in,  
And e'en a fool has rights."

[*The JESTER ceases abruptly, and slowly looks around the room. The ladies shrink back as their gaze meets his. The courtiers look with astonishment at each other. The DUKE, still standing near the door, changes color as the recital ends, and a puzzled expression comes over his face.*

THE JESTER (*with a sudden outburst of passion*):

Why laugh you not, ye lords and ladies all,  
And you, O King, where is your sense of mirth?  
Have you not heard the jest? Is it not good?  
Ye noblemen whose ruthless lust has sent  
Once honored men into dishonored graves,  
And changed once happy homes to breeding-place  
Of curses and despair,—does not the thought  
That e'er a Duke of France should honor love  
And love a woman's honor, though it be  
A peasant maiden's, reaping in the fields—  
Does not the thought arouse your mirth, my lords?  
And what of this: that e'en a fool has rights,  
Though they be challenged by the peers of France?  
Is this not cause for laughter?

THE DUKE (*interrupting*):

The Fool is mad.

THE JESTER:

Ay, mad, indeed, and to such great extent  
That e'en a ravening dog would envy me,  
Had he a foe to bite. But you, good Duke,  
Must surely see the humor of my jest.

*[He slowly goes nearer the DUKE.]*

Explain it to the ladies, who, it seems,  
Shake now with fear, stead laughter.

*[He goes still nearer.]*

This boon, the *second* that I crave of thee,  
Will be the last, good Duke.

*[The JESTER goes still nearer. The DUKE divines his purpose, and draws his sword just as the JESTER leaps at him with dagger uplifted. The drawn sword pierces his breast, and he falls to the ground dying. There is a great commotion among the ladies and the courtiers.]*

THE DUKE (*turning to the King*):

He forced me to it, Sire, in self-defence.

THE JESTER (*in a voice scarcely audible*):

Had it but reached his heart!

It was the very dagger that she used  
To save her honor when she slew herself.  
Fear for her father's welfare held her hand,  
Or she had slain him too. . . .

Ah! wait . . . Elise . . . my love . . . soon we  
shall meet

Where none can come between . . . and e'en . . .  
a fool . . .

Has rights. . . . (*He dies.*)

[*The KING points to the door, and all leave the room, excepting the DUKE, who waits in silence for the KING to speak.*]

THE KING:

The blow you struck, Duke, was in self-defence;  
You therefore lay the blame upon the Fool.  
'T is true. The deed is done. And there 's an end.  
But what of her who also struck a blow,  
Against herself in self-defence 'gainst you?  
Where shall the blame be laid?

[*The DUKE remains silent, and the KING continues:*]

In truth, my lord,  
I loved the Jester whom so foully you  
Have wronged, and now if I should bid you go  
In exile to atone your black misdeed,  
Should you have aught to say?

THE DUKE: Not aught, my liege.

When you did send the Count of Chartres away  
Upon some dangerous journey to the East,  
Because, poor man, his wife was beautiful,  
Did he have aught to say? No more have I.

[*The KING flushes, and then grows thoughtful. After a few moments of silence he speaks.*]

THE KING:

Yes, you are right;  
'T is not for me to judge. I too have sinned.  
And gone unpunished. But heard you the words  
Formed by the dying lips of this poor Fool?  
Perchance there is a place where just deserts  
Shall be dealt out by some all-righteous Judge.  
To *His* grace I commend you, my lord Duke.  
Now go!

*[The DUKE bows, and withdraws. The KING stands long beside the body of the JESTER, deep in thought. The spaniel all the while is affectionately licking the face of the FOOL. Now and then the animal whines. At last the KING's reverie is interrupted by the entrance of an attendant.]*

THE ATTENDANT (*without perceiving the corpse*):

The hounds await your pleasure, Sire.

*[The KING does not seem to hear him.]*

THE ATTENDANT (*after waiting a moment*):

Your steed is at the gate, my liege.

THE KING:

I go not to the hunt to-day.

*[The attendant bows, and withdraws. The curtain falls.]*

## IMMANUEL KANT

SMALL of stature—five feet tall  
Never over strong in health;  
Plain professor—that is all—  
Never title—never wealth—  
Never love of child or wife—  
Thus he lived throughout his life.

Königsberg, the little town—  
Was the village of his birth;  
Königsberg saw him go down  
In sweet death to Mother Earth—  
(Ne'er he travelled, so they say,  
More than sixty miles away.)

Königsberg, how true thy name!  
Ay, the Mountain of the King,  
With the crown of deathless fame  
Such as gold can never bring.  
For he gathered from man's world  
Rarest gems of truth empearled.



Master of the realm of thought—

Well the limits have you found  
Of man's wisdom. It is naught

Bounded by the infinite round;  
For his reason, by its laws,  
Cannot fathom End or Cause.

Servant of the moral will,

Well you show the lofty height  
Toward which men may follow still,

Ever gaining purer light,  
Ever rising from the sod,  
Ever reaching nearer God.

Not the outcome of man's deeds,

But the intent of his act—  
This indeed the creed of creeds:

Will the right,—and if the fact  
Be a worldly failure, then  
Will the right, and act again!

At the power of your brain

Systems of tradition fell:  
Men invoked the curse of Cain,  
Calling you the son of Hell,  
For they saw not that you led  
To the Living through the Dead.

At the power of your heart  
Structures of great faith arose.  
Though their beams shall fall apart,  
Covered by the future snows,  
This their essence naught may kill:  
Man is master of his will.

Poor, untitled, weak, and small,  
Lacking woman's wonder-love,  
Yet you found the Heart of All—  
Yet you reached the heights above—  
Making man's True Self your chant:  
This your fame, Immanuel Kant!

## A WOMAN

SHE was as fair as the dawn of the day,  
Splendid as pearls in the depths of the sea.  
“What shall I bring that at last I may say,  
Your love is for me?”

Brought her his love,—but she questioned its worth;  
Yielded his honor,—she turned in disdain.  
“Gift of my life may move you to mirth!”  
She smiled at him slain.

Plucked a white rose that lay on her breast  
Whiter than whitest of roses in May;  
Crimsoned the blossom in blood; with a jest  
Went forth on her way.

## THE CHILDREN IN THE FACTORIES

*How do you feed your furnaces, brother?*

*What fuel is in your fires?*

Coal and wood

Are my furnaces' food:

With them I feed my fires.

But why do you turn away your face?

An honest living is no disgrace,

And I must feed my fires.

*How are your wheels kept swiftly turning?*

*What glistens upon your wheels?*

Oil in great store

My workmen pour

Upon the circling wheels.

But why that loathing in your eye?

Success itself doth justify,

And I must oil my wheels.

*What do you sell in the market-places,  
Wherefor they give you gold?  
Shining glass  
And cotton in mass  
I sell for glittering gold.  
But why that curse upon your lips?  
Can aught on earth my gold eclipse,  
My best-belovèd gold?*

*With lives of little children  
Your flaming fires you feed.  
With blood of helpless children  
Your circling wheels gain speed;  
And souls of stunted children  
You barter in your greed.*

## THE SPHINX

No need of Egypt, for man's mind  
Is wider than all countries are;  
It soars above the highest wind  
And consorts with the furthest star;  
It strives against the bars of space  
And knocks upon the gates of Time,  
Running a never ending race—  
Unto a goal sublime?

No need of Egypt, for man's heart  
Beats even with the wings of years  
And plays its never changing part  
Of sunshine, sorrow, joys, and tears.  
Unaltered are the quest and strife;  
Old passions breathe we at each breath;  
Still at the heels of every life  
With dogged footsteps follows Death.

The keenest wind, the brightest star,  
The deepest love, the purest hope  
Avail not yet to all unbar  
The gate of darkness where we grope,  
Are we but as the dust that flies,  
And men the mates to meaner things?  
The mystery still unravelled lies  
A skein of strangely blended strings.

*No need of Egypt for, methinks,  
At every hearthstone sits the Sphinx.*

## THE LYRIC OF LIFE AND LOVE

In an ancient wood a castle stood, its walls were heaven-high,  
Its moat so deep that the realms of sleep would shallow seem thereby;  
And ever a sound wandered around, and lost itself in the sky.

Was it the breeze in the hemlock trees, sighing for other days?

Was it the strain of souls in pain, wailing their evil ways?  
It was the prayer of a maiden fair, meshed in magic maze.

In answer to her the sorcerer had said: " You shall be free  
As the birds above, when of Life and Love a true lyric you sing to me;  
Nor until then tho' gods and men should beg on bended knee."



A heavy fold of hair of gold o'er either shoulder flung,  
Her eyes on fire, she grasped the lyre, that to her fingers  
clung;  
Her voice was sweet as larks that greet the morn, and thus  
she sung:

*Life is a lily  
With bells of joy;  
Love is its music  
Without alloy.  
Pure is the lily,  
Dream-fair is love;  
Earth is my witness,  
And heaven above.*

The last sweet tone had hardly flown to the realm of  
silenced song  
When, his heart astir, the sorcerer recalled old passions  
strong,  
And he bowed his head in grief, and said: "You have read  
the riddle wrong."

Again she strove to sing of love, again of life to sing,  
But e'er the same the answer came: "This is not truth  
you bring."  
And the long years fled till hope lay dead, slain by much  
sorrowing.

He was not real, her soul's ideal, the lover of her dream,  
Who, true and brave, should come to save her in her need  
supreme,  
On his fair face God's holy grace, and in his eyes love's  
gleam.

And so, at last, when youth had passed, she cried: "I have  
it now."

Hark to me well, thou son of Hell, O sorcerer dark of  
brow,  
And set me free from witchery. This is thy song, I  
trow:

*Life is a cypress,  
Servant of death;  
Love is but seeming,  
Fleeting as breath.  
Dark is the cypress,  
Dream false is love;  
Earth is my witness,  
And heaven above.*

The drear song died on the even-tide that bore it far  
away,

But the spell of doom lay in its gloom, and could not choose  
but stay.

"Say, have I wrought the thing you sought?" And the  
other answered, "Nay."

The bitter tears of passionate years gave way to calmer  
thought,  
Until, at length, a greater strength than angry grief was  
brought  
To teach the truth that age to youth eternally has  
taught.

Through prison bars alone the stars had cast on her their  
light;  
Words of the wise her only eyes whereby with others'  
sight  
Man's world she saw of strife and law, of evil and of  
right,

Save that for her, interpreter remained her living soul  
That wandered far from star to star, that reached life's  
every goal,  
Lived in all men, and in its ken comprised life's truth, the  
whole.

Ah, she was old, the hair of gold long since had turned to  
grey,  
The glorious sunrise in her eyes gone with a far past day,  
Yet not alone grief's sombre tone her strong, brave voice  
did sway:

*Life is a rose that discloses  
Beauty which no man supposes  
Hidden within;  
Love is the fragrance so tender  
That in our hearts doth engender  
Hatred of sin;  
Sin is the worm that despoileth  
The canker that cruelly soileth,  
Yet cannot kill all.  
Sorrow 's the sister of Duty  
Adding to Summer's beauty  
The pathos of Fall.  
Leaves of the rose must be going;  
Eternally Time's winds are blowing,  
Yet will endure  
The seed of the blossom forever,  
The fragrance that Death cannot sever  
From hearts that are pure.  
Joy-begot spirit that seeth  
Clearly, and fearlessly freeth  
Man from Sin's strife.  
Teach us all, chastened by Sorrow,  
Bravely to face the last morrow  
O Love in Life!*

"May ill betide!" the sorcerer cried. "Thus to my spell  
a close.

This darkened hall to ruin must fall at the lyric of the rose,  
And you are free as each must be who life's deep truths once  
knows."

With his black wand he touched her hand, then vanished  
in eclipse.

There was the sound of crashing ground, the roar of battling  
ships.

\* \* \* \* \*

At last, free, free! In death lay she, a smile upon her lips.

## MOUNTAIN VERSES

PEACE in the wooded stillness of the night,  
And in the murmur of the waters, peace.  
The world's hot heart in wonder seems to cease  
From beating, lulled by far-off starry light.

Lake, forest, fish that swims and bird that flies,  
Wild beast, perchance that on the morrow dies,—  
Peace rests on all.  
Yet is there unrest in my inmost soul—  
A nameless yearning for an unknown goal,  
A low, insistent call.

## A DIFFERENCE

A WORKMAN, by despair made wild,  
His stunted mind of sense bereft,  
Filches a coin. Dear sirs, his child  
Is starving!—Granted. Theft is theft.  
The vaunted laws of a great nation  
Cannot excuse such desperation.

Secure behind his walls of gold  
The wealth of myriads this man plunders,  
By vastness of his schemes made bold;  
Nor reckes the sound of distant thunders.  
His followers with contented glance  
Review his action as finance.

## LAUNCELOT

"GIVE me God-speed, great King," he said;  
"Forth through the land I go  
Nor come till wrong be banishèd  
And cruel knights laid low;  
Nor come till all be punishèd  
Who wrought a woman's woe."

Then Arthur spake, "Behold I place  
My hands in blessing on thy sword.  
Give me sweet leave to kiss thy face;  
God ever grant thee every grace,  
Most dear and valiant lord."

No farewell word spake Guenevere.  
She looked on him a little while;  
She spake no parting word of cheer  
But smiled a curious smile.  
O fraught with woe past all surmise  
The kiss she gave him with her eyes!  
O fraught with hope of burning bliss  
That first and fateful silent kiss!



The blood ran cold, the blood ran hot  
Throughout the veins of Launcelot;  
He looked once more upon the Queen  
Who lovely sate with downcast mien.

He lifted high his trembling sword  
In last salute unto his lord;  
Then to his men he gave the call,  
And, with a great heart, clove in twain  
By loving passion, loyal pain,  
Sir Launcelot left the hall.

TO EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN

(*April 5, 1901*)

To all the laurels that you wear  
We will not add a leaf of fame,  
Or crown your oft-encrownèd hair  
With diadem of lofty name.  
Let others wreathe you with the bays  
That shall be yours until the end;  
We come not here to-night to praise:  
We pass the evening with our friend.

Men's genius may be found in marts;  
They give unto the world their brains;  
They will not wholly give their hearts  
But hide a spot where Friendship reigns,  
And keep it sacred from strange eyes  
And from the outer world defend.  
Earth has not lost all Paradise.  
We pass the evening with our friend.

Thy Paradise wilt thou unbar  
And let us rest with thee awhile?  
We know how fair the Spirits are  
That in thy heart's most sacred aisle  
Have found a place since early days,  
And what sweet grace their thoughts must lend;  
We, too, would tread the favored ways:—  
We pass the evening with our friend.

Ah, see, how rich the foliage is!  
How warm the sunshine of thy smile!  
How pure the air; whilst memories  
Of youth make thee a youth awhile;  
And though thy hair be silvered snow  
With confidence do we contend  
Not age did this: 't is merely so  
To match thy heart and soul, O Friend!

## EVENING ON THE MOUNTAIN LAKE

### I

IN languid curves the ripples spread  
And end in whispers on the shore;  
The hawk slow circles overhead,  
His day of hunting o'er;  
The Sun hath kissed the West good-night;  
Immortal lover! Kisses rare!  
Each day they bring a new delight  
And leave fresh blushes there.

O frail and clear mysterious gleam  
Trembling from on high,  
Are you alone that which you seem,  
Pale princess of the sky?  
Thoughts you inspire of wider scope  
Than all the heavens are,  
And dim desires and deathless hope,  
O evening star.

Swift hurtling through the yielding brush  
His branching antlers back,  
More swiftly than the startled thrush  
That flies athwart his track,  
Unto his verdant meal the deer,  
Lord of the woodland, leaps,  
To browse where on the waters clear  
The fragrant lily sleeps.

## II

Weary am I of man's ways,  
The failures we name success—  
Our crowns and laurels and bays  
That hide much emptiness;  
For we bind the soul's freedom with thongs,  
With honor we compromise,  
Nor grant that all wrongs are wrongs  
And that all lies are lies.

The trees do not barter for gain,  
And rich though the harvest grows  
Its gold shall not win for the grain  
An obsequious bow from the rose.

The caress of the soft-lipped breeze  
And the blast of the loud-mouthed gale  
Are impartial to tallest of trees  
And frailest of blossoms frail.

You say: "O dreamer most blind  
Yourself will you sweetly thus cheat?  
Is the hawk to the sparrow kind?  
Has the serpent forgotten deceit?  
Row forth to the furthest shore  
And yet shall your vision be vain;  
These woods have seen carnage before,  
These waters shall know it again."

Have your way and your say; but O soon  
Come thou, my love, unto me,  
And silent let us commune  
With all eternity.  
Short is our day. It must cease  
And death is never afar.  
Here in a beautiful world of peace  
Shineth the evening star!

## THE DEATH OF LORENZO

(*Careggi, 1492*)

AN ATTENDANT

(*Opening the door and ushering in Savonarola*)

The prior of St. Mark's—

[*The ATTENDANT withdraws*]

LORENZO

Is very welcome.

I feared you might not come to me at all,  
Or until time and I had parted ways.  
Death is impatient, Fra Girolamo,  
And beckons to me with his bony hand.  
I would confess, and have you shrive my soul.

SAVONAROLA

Are there no other priests in Italy?

LORENZO

Not one less gracious.

SAVONAROLA

Wherefore, then, call me?

LORENZO

Nor one more honest, though he be my foe.

SAVONAROLA

Your praise, I fear, outruns your memory,  
For recollection tells me 't is no year  
Since, at your bidding, Mariano strove  
To overwhelm me with his thunderbolts  
Of calumny and lies. His pulpit rang  
With accusations of so vile a kind  
He had not dared unless by your command.  
Let him be your confessor.

LORENZO

Nay, my friend,  
We will not speak of things a year ago;  
For then I feared alone one man in Florence,—  
Savonarola; now I fear but God.

SAVONAROLA

Savonarola is the voice of God.  
'T is He who chose me prior of St. Mark's  
Not you, Lorenzo; He who bids my gaze



Pierce through the veils of dim futurity,  
The Lord of all the world. He is my master.  
I owe no homage to the lord of Florence.

LORENZO

None asks he of you now. A dying man  
Finds all too great the burden of his sins.  
Help you to lighten it.

SAVONAROLA

Well, be it so;  
But only if you grant all I require;  
Else to your death unshriven go by me.

LORENZO

What will you have?

SAVONAROLA

O cautious Medici,  
You promise naught beforehand.

LORENZO

For I fear  
The reaching mind of Fra Girolamo.

SAVONAROLA

Three things do I exact. First, that you vow  
Full faith in God's great mercy; without this  
I have no power to shrive you of your sins.

LORENZO

With heart submissive, and with penitence  
I do confess my utmost faith in Him  
Whom you and I name Master.

SAVONAROLA

Oh, how swift  
And easily this meek response rushed forth.  
How many a lie, with no less speed, has leaped  
Destructive from your lips!

LORENZO

You have no right  
To doubt my soul's sincerity in this.  
The vow of faith I make to God, not you.  
Let Him be judge of it. He will requite.

SAVONAROLA

He will requite! Oh, that the folk of Florence  
But knew the meaning of those syllables!

LORENZO

Your second requisition, prior?

SAVONAROLA

Is this:

All that you have unjustly gained, restore!

LORENZO

More have I given from my private purse  
Than taken from mine enemies o'erthrown.

SAVONAROLA

Have I impugned your generosity?  
Not so, Lorenzo, but I bid you make  
Redress for tyranny exceeding it.  
Volterra's pillaging leaps to my mind,  
A ruthless act that stripped a city bare.  
God will remember it, if you forget.  
And when the hated Pazzi were cast down,  
Theft stalked abroad beneath your willing gaze;  
Nor do I know how often, or how much  
In times of need, the treasury of Florence  
Hath to Lorenzo at Lorenzo's word  
Given submissive. Restore, restore, restore!  
God keeps accounts, and, mark me, He will know  
If but a single coin you now withhold.

LORENZO

Beneath my pillow you will find two keys.  
I have not strength to reach them.    Treasured vaults  
Spring open at their touch, revealing gold  
In serried ranks of calm omnipotence—  
My armies that have won my victories,  
Ruling the hearts of princes and of mobs.  
Compute as best you can what I may owe  
In restitution: double then your guess,  
And trebly take the sum that you have reached.—  
God shall not think “A merchant deals with me.”

SAVONAROLA

I come then to my third request.

LORENZO

It is?

SAVONAROLA

That you give back her liberty to Florence.

LORENZO

How mean you, Fra Girolamo? Have not  
The citizens their vote in this republic,  
Wherewith to guide the reins of government?

SAVONAROLA

O crafty quibbler, at the gates of death  
Still do you strive to throw your loaded dice?  
Florence is no republic, save in name;  
Hiding the abject soul of slavery  
Beneath the garb of freedom. You alone,  
Who rule with sinuous hand her destiny,  
Can raise the crouching city from her shame.

LORENZO

What will you have?

SAVONAROLA

Proclaim the Medici  
Henceforth but citizens as others are.  
Decree that after you have bowed to death  
Our dearest city shall not lie supine  
Beneath the feet of Pietro, your son,  
To be his footstool, as she has been yours.  
Give back her liberty to Florence!

LORENZO

Priest,  
Hath not our city,—whom I also love,  
Not less than you, believe me,—greatly grown

In learning and in splendor and in power  
Beneath the guidance of the Medici?

SAVONAROLA

O galleries of paintings and rare art,  
O gardens that are Edens to the eye,  
Academies where ancient culture dwells,  
Ye, have the Medici to Florence given.  
O minds that are serene in wisdom's light,  
O hearts that from corruption still are pure,  
O souls that turn with reverence to God,  
Ye, have the Medici from Florence taken.  
Once more, Lorenzo, is it yes, or no?

LORENZO

You bade me largely from my coffers take  
And did I not most lavishly assent?

SAVONAROLA

How shall your gold avail you in the grave?

LORENZO

But now you bid me of mine honor give,  
And slay the fame that else outlives my death.

SAVONAROLA

Give back her liberty to Florence!

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LORENZO

Hear,

O Cosimo de Medici, this monk  
Would have me tarnish your illustrious name,  
And all the glory of our family!

SAVONAROLA

Now is the end, Lorenzo. Shall I shrive  
Or leave accursed your sin-encircled soul?  
Give back her liberty to Florence!

[LORENZO *turns his face to the wall*. After some moments of silence SAVONAROLA leaves the room. A little while later an attendant enters and finds LORENZO dead.]

## TO ONE ABSENT

RICH summer floods the earth; o'er hill and vale  
Beauty reigns empress in her realm of green,  
Deeming no single blade of grass too mean  
To be her servitor; the nightingale  
Voices his ecstasy till night grows pale  
And lightens into day; while all between  
Shy dawn and dark eyed dusk the woodland scene  
Gives joyous heed to robin, thrush, and quail.

Oh, all this beauty in the hearts of trees  
And all this music in the souls of birds  
Can bring to me no solace and no ease:  
Lacking the music of thy longed-for words,  
Lacking the beauty of thy love-lit face,  
How lovely, yet how loveless is this place!



## SWINBURNE

HUSHED is the voice that set a world on fire,  
Fanning men's passions with the breath of flame.  
Yielding to Death's inexorable claim  
He, whom no fear on earth could e'er inspire,  
Hath loosed his vibrant fingers from the lyre  
Whose music, echoing down the halls of fame,  
Shall keep alive the wonder of his name,  
The master melodist of the Victorian choir.

Oh, that his intuition were as pure,  
His thoughts inspiring, as his notes are sweet!  
How past compute his greatness would endure,  
And mountain-high fame's blossoms at his feet!  
The magic and the music of the sea  
Were his who mastered not life's mystery.

## THE LESSON

FROM the high-chair to my lap  
When I take the little chap  
How he smiles in baby glee,  
For the best of friends are we!  
Then I open wide the book  
Guiding eager eyes to look  
At the beasts all pictured there—  
Tiger, horsey, moo-cow, bear!

His the rapture not alone  
As the animals are shown.  
Ah, the happy little boy  
Shares with older eyes his joy;  
For me, too, a new world lies  
Open, full of sweet surprise.  
Wondrous seem they, and how fair,  
Tiger, horsey, moo-cow, bear!

Much we learn from sages' lore,  
And from songs of poets more.  
Let not sage or poet boast;  
From small children learn we most.  
Sin, and grief, and care depart,  
And new magic floods the heart  
When his sweet-toned notes declare  
Tiger, horsey, moo-cow, bear!

## THE GAME

"GET it," cries the little voice,  
Voice of sweetness, voice of laughter,  
Voice that bids the heart rejoice,—  
"Get it," and he toddles after,  
Fast as little legs can go  
To the ball he fain would capture;  
Falls upon it, gets it so,  
Smiling with a child's sweet rapture.

Then again he throws the ball  
Far as baby strength is able:  
Sees it fall, and bound, and fall  
'Twixt the bedstead and the table.  
"Get it,"—and once more the quest,  
So exciting, so beguiling,  
Grants the little boy no rest  
Till fresh triumph leaves him smiling.

Ah! if we could also play  
Games with such a happy ending  
Grief were further than to-day—  
Hope and joy more near their blending;  
But Fate flings the sphere of bliss  
Past the reach of our endeavor,  
And we touch it but to miss;—  
Firmly we can hold it never!

## IN THE WOODS

ROBERT

You guessed wherefore I bade you hunt with me  
And would take no refusal?

SIDNEY

You know I am a hunter; so are you.  
The day is clear, the deer here plentiful.  
What need is there to seek for cause beside?

ROBERT

It seems you are less quick in fathoming  
The minds of men than reaching tender depths  
In hearts of women.

SIDNEY

Speech in metaphor  
Is a fair road when once the goal is clear;  
Confusing else, and I know not your aim.  
Therefore use simple words, direct and few.

ROBERT

We came here two; one only shall go forth.  
Can you now follow where my thought's path leads?

SIDNEY

To murder, it would seem.

ROBERT

To murder? No.  
There shall be equal chance between us both.  
Yet wherefore ask you not the motive now  
That moulds my action? Some well-feigned surprise  
Would suit yourself and the occasion too.  
Have you no questions?

SIDNEY

None. For well I know  
Your jealous nature, and therein I find  
All answers to all questions left unasked.  
Yet to avert a murder still in germ  
My word of honor here I give to you  
That this October air God-free from taint  
Is not more pure than Ellinor, your wife.

ROBERT

*Your* word of honor! *Honor* and *your* word!  
The poisonous snake which strove to strike at you  
As we came hither, and which now is dead,  
Crushed by the stone you threw, might well have cried:  
"Lo! I am innocent of ill intent  
I swear it by mine own pure guilelessness!"  
*Your* word of honor! Now 's no time for jest.

SIDNEY

By God! You drive me far. Robert, beware  
Lest fury throw my courage to the winds  
And make me weaken to the craven part  
That you would have me play!

ROBERT

No craven part,  
But man to man with Fate for arbiter.  
The woods shall be our witnesses, and they  
Shall keep our secret. Echoes from our guns  
Shall echo into silence.

SIDNEY

And the world,  
That million-headed Cerberus whose jaws



Will bite and rend unless you throw it sops,  
How shall its hideous noise be quieted  
If we should do this deed?

ROBERT

One often hears  
Of accidents in hunting.

SIDNEY

Ellinor  
Is innocent!

ROBERT

We spoke of accidents.  
If you should live, it was a sudden shot  
That leaped unhappy from your careless gun  
Slaying the friend you loved. If I survive  
The "your" becomes a "my," the "you" an "I,"  
And in all else the tale unaltered stands.

SIDNEY

If both should fall?

ROBERT

I had not thought of that!  
It is not likely. We must take the chance.  
If one is wounded and the other dead,

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Why then, a stag swift turning in his flight  
Took course between us, parted by some space,  
And we, with thoughts all centring in the hunt,  
Paid sadly for the strange leap of the beast  
In injuring each the other, one to death.

SIDNEY

How easily you plan to circumvent  
The world's suspicion of a future wrong.  
And yet you have not power to oppose  
Your own suspicions of a wrong not past,  
Not present, and as far from being done  
As deepest darkness is from brightest sun.

ROBERT

Waste not your strength in words that brand you false.  
Swift bullets are the only argument  
That can convince me now; for Ellinor,  
She that was once my wife, has not denied  
The cursèd truth you lying called a lie.  
So now, the rifles, come!

SIDNEY

Denied? Denied?  
Madman, you questioned her, insulted her,  
And would have her deny? Do you not know

That highest purity and highest pride  
Meet interfusing in the magic woof  
Of a true woman's nature? Should she say:  
"Nay, I am not the vile thing that you deem,"  
And by her answer touch the lower plane  
Whereon contemptible you questioning stand?

ROBERT

If Ellinor had loved me as I her  
She would have recognized that love distraught  
Can not be calmed by silence. But she loves  
Not me, her husband. Come, we but waste words!

SIDNEY

Nay, wait! For thus I cannot let you die  
Nor die myself. Know then that it is you  
And only you she loves, and that her love  
Because so deep and pure could never guess  
The shallowness and murkiness of yours;  
So shallow that suspicion's lightest breath  
Roused furious waves of passion ruinous,  
So murky that most hideous of thoughts  
Found there swift welcoming. She could not see  
Beneath dark accusation's awful mask  
The love you say you bear her. Thus in pride

Her silence gave the answer to your words.  
Had you but seen her heart, there had you read:  
"Robert, you only, only you I love."

ROBERT

Perhaps within the barrel of my gun  
Death at this moment lies in wait for you.  
Yet standing on the verge whence at a bound  
You leap into Eternity's vast realm  
Where God—who knows?—gives justice unto all,  
Here lying-lipped you bid your life adieu.  
Well, courage is of many kinds. And now?

SIDNEY

And now that I have done my uttermost,  
And can no more to make your mind grasp truth  
Your eyes to see, your heart to feel—why then,  
What if I say: "I will not fight with you"?

ROBERT

We came here two; one only shall go forth.

SIDNEY

This way or that way, it is murder still.  
I will not fight the duel!

ROBERT

Nay, you must;  
For what are right and wrong but social use?  
And you and I are now our only world  
Wherein our wills are sanction for our deeds.  
If we agree, thus shall the wrong be laid.  
What need we care for statutes and for laws?  
We are alone. The forest is our world.  
We fear not death. Let us therefore agree.

SIDNEY

If we could go, if you could go alone  
Unto the utmost reachings of the globe  
Where the stars shiver in the northern cold  
And in eternal ice the earth lies wrapped,  
You would not be removed a millionth part  
Of millionth inch of space from that stern bar  
Whereat is given the verdict of men's deeds.  
The minor customs of diverging times,  
The usages that are the toll we pay  
On life's full highway, these all readily  
Can be thrown off in solitude, as one  
Bathes naked in the forest, unashamed.  
But his high sense of what to him at least  
Is, was, and must be everlasting right,

The purpose to hold fast to honor's law  
As his eyes, irrespective of all else,  
Read justice, this no man can ever lose  
Though of the human race he be the last,  
Alone upon a devastated earth.  
For highest honor is that honor high  
Which to our higher selves we owe, a debt  
That every man must ever recognize.  
I will not fight the duel!

ROBERT

Self, self, self!

Can you not think of her, of Ellinor?  
Unless you fight, I swear upon my word,  
*My* word of honor that none may gainsay  
Henceforth exposed to public gaze she goes  
Smirched with disgrace, and branded with her shame.  
Now will you face the combat like a man,  
Or, like a coward, let the world's hard eyes  
Dwell with contempt upon your Ellinor,  
The woman whom you love?

[*A pause.*]

SIDNEY

That shall not be.  
And I *do* love her. Come, take you your stand.  
Your words have made we ready.

ROBERT

God be thanked!

A hundred paces—will that be enough?

SIDNEY

Five times enough. If there's a deed to do,  
Why, do it thoroughly or not at all.

ROBERT

If this is courage you are brave indeed.  
If it is desperation's dying thrust  
Then, too, I meet it gladly.—From this bush  
Take you ten paces; ten steps will I take,  
And then we turn. Give you the one word, "Fire,"  
Whereat we shoot. You understand?

SIDNEY

Yes, all.

ROBERT

Have you your place?

SIDNEY

I have. And you?

ROBERT

I mine.

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SIDNEY

Fire!

*[The smoke clears away.]*

ROBERT

Your bullet struck me not.

SIDNEY

Nor did yours

Strike me.

ROBERT

Strange that an aim so straight as yours  
Should at this distance fail!

SIDNEY

And no less strange  
That you whose skill as hunter is far known  
Should this time miss your mark!

*[A pause.]*

Why did you wish

To spare my life?

ROBERT

Because of Ellinor  
Whom I so love despite her guilt with you

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That if my death together with your life  
May bring her happiness and lasting peace  
My gun shall fail while yours, please God, aims true.  
This is the truth. The truth now tell to me.  
Wherefore shot you amiss?

SIDNEY

Because of her,  
Of Ellinor, your wife who loves but you,  
And whom I love, and for whose peace and joy  
I count it happiness to lose my life;  
By mine own death thus giving proof to you  
Of that for which my word did not suffice.  
This is the truth. Will you believe me now?

[*A pause.*]

ROBERT

Can you forgive me, Sidney?

SIDNEY

I forgive.

ROBERT

And Ellinor, will she forgive, think you?

## SIDNEY

Love pardons all, and of to-day's events  
She need not ever know. The woods grow dark.  
Let us be going. Yonder is the path. . . .  
How they will twit us when they see us come  
Without a partridge even from the hunt!

## NAPOLEON IN HELL

AROUND him in wild flaming surges seethed  
The furious tumult: crazed with wrath the horde  
Whose fierce reverberated shriekings poured  
Torrential on him; close and closer breathed  
Mad visages of awful vengeance, wreathed  
With flames less ardent than the passion stored  
In souls that cursed the Corsican whose sword  
Had in their blood and in their hearts been sheathed.

A mother thrust before his eyes the limb  
Of her son mangled, saying: "Eat the dead  
Who batten on the living";—spat on him,—  
The man whose will had been all Europe's dread!  
He saw her not, nor heard the hellish crew,  
Still silent brooding over Waterloo.

## THE MOOD OF BLISS

THE slightest touch of the careless hand  
Mars forever the butterfly's wing,  
Nor any artist in any land  
Its pristine beauty shall restore  
To the perfect thing, the fragile thing  
Forevermore.

The slightest tones of the careless word  
To the mood of bliss an end will bring,  
And its return, O hearts deep-stirred,  
In vain, alas, you will implore  
Of the perfect thing, the subtle thing  
Forevermore.

## LYRIC

LOVELY lily of the lake,  
White and gold and fair to see,  
What is all your loveliness  
Now to me?

Glorious cloud that cleaves the sky,  
To the highest angels dear,  
Can you say, " Take heart, take heart,  
She is here " ?

She is gone from out my sight  
Who is fair as ye are fair.  
Lilies now are foolish leaves;  
Clouds but air !

## COMPENSATION

SMITE, smite, smite on the anvil of life, O Man,  
With courage for your hammer, that you perfect your plan;  
And if the goal you reach not, this thought shall be your  
pay:  
The sparks struck forth by your hand will light another's  
way.

## THE TROOPS RETURNING

TRIUMPHANT banners hid the smiling sky,  
While blossoms clustered under marching feet;  
The shouts of welcome ringing down the street  
Drowned in their joy a sonless mother's cry.

## NIGHT IN ALASKA

THE lofty mountains with the starry sky  
In still communion stand; the wooded shores  
Whisper a soundless message to the waves,  
And, in the quiet of the night, the soul  
Perceives its kinship with the infinite.  
When, lo! the winds bear down an eagle's cry  
That rends the silence with an earthly sound  
And breaks the spell which wove the world in one!

## AN INSCRIPTION

COULD words express thy loveliness  
Or pen and ink thy charms  
This pen would covered be with rust,  
The ink would dry and turn to dust  
Before my words of praise, dear friend,  
Could reach their end.

## LINES SUGGESTED BY THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

THE foam of ocean kisses lies white about the feet  
Of her whose flames are blisses to all the eyes they greet.  
A statue such as this is, when shall you ever meet?  
Not in beauty, not in worth.  
Counted forth in bronze or gold,  
But such loveliness as earth  
Never fully wrought of old.  
To the shackled a releasing,  
To the loyal a caressing,  
And to all the world a blessing—  
Ay, a blessing manifold.

Greece was for the Greeks alone;  
*Her* arms stretch to all mankind,  
Yearningly a little more  
To the wretched and the poor  
Who at last a haven find on her hospitable shore;  
Symbol, guide, and inspiration  
Of the freedom and compassion, heart and heart blood, of  
our nation.



When in mingled bronze to mould  
Or to carve in massive stone  
Virtues such as these,  
Mighty masters, have you known,  
Phidias and Praxiteles?  
Beauty, beauty was your theme.—  
There are times when all endeavor  
Looms a worthless toil forever,  
And only beauty's visions seem  
The soul's oases in life's desert dream.

I too, am beauty's servitor;  
I kneel and worship her;  
I would not make her loveliness  
The shadow of a whisper less.  
But yet, beyond the mists, afar,  
At heaven's highest height behold the steadfast star!  
We see it, hushed and wondering,  
In this imperfect world the only perfect thing.

CARL SCHURZ

His conscience knew not compromise ;  
He never stooped to rise ;  
And all the honors of this world  
Were less than honor, in his eyes.

## THE BISHOP'S DREAM

THE Bishop sat writing and writing away  
For the King was coming to church that day,  
And he vowed that the heart of his liege should be stirred  
By his lofty strain and eloquent word.  
So he sought in a thousand careful ways  
To prune this sentence and turn that phrase  
Till his themes be wrought in their proper relation:  
Chastity, courage, and abnegation.  
For he knew that the grant of a boon was at stake  
Such as King could yield and Bishop take.  
Power and wealth in the balance hung,  
And he counted much on his honied tongue.  
Nor in vain; for his discourse, people say,  
Rose on inspired wings that day.  
E'en in frivolous hearts his words sank deep  
And hardened courtiers were seen to weep.

The King at the doors of the church stood awhile;  
Half mournful, it may be, his quizzical smile.  
For a moment he saw, down time's vista, the youth  
Whom years had not robbed of his faith in men's truth—

A noble young prince!—The King sighed as he glanced  
Where the splendid form of the prelate advanced.  
“Indeed, my lord Bishop, your lofty words stole  
Deep into my heart, far into my soul.  
Glad I am that my people should have such a guide  
To point them the pitfalls of passion and pride.  
The virtuous courage you knew to display  
Has left me in debt, and the King will repay.”

Whereat the other uncovered his head.  
“The praise of my liege is great honor,” he said;  
And his crafty mind coined, with a thrill of elation,  
Swift into gold the King’s commendation.

That evening, just at the stroke of eight,  
The Bishop entered the palace gate,  
Revolving his plans, and wondering  
Whether his seat would be next to the King,  
Or if—and as well—his neighbor would be  
The Duchess de Tours or the Duke de Crècy.  
Imagine, then, the thoughts of his Grace  
On meeting his partner face to face,—  
Madame Léonore de l’Espinasse!

Search me the whole of the kingdom o’er,  
But you find no second Léonore.

Hers was the soul of Egypt's Queen,  
Or the lustful soul of the Roman Faustine,  
And none had dared but a willful king  
To bring to his feast such a shameless thing.

The Bishop drew back and his face flamed red  
E'er it paled with the pallor of the dead.  
He felt, unseeing, the courtiers' gaze  
As they watched his countenance in amaze.  
A moment he stood, twixt wrath and fear,  
Till the monarch's soft voice fell on his ear:  
"No greater honor, my lord, I deem  
Than her whom I hold in most esteem  
To place at your side, could I surely show  
To one who the worth of such favor will know."

Chastity, courage—these words sound well  
Where the vaulted cathedral arches swell,  
But too holy they are to be made the sport  
Of rollicking lords in a ribald court.  
And deed and speech, as all wise men know,  
Cannot always through life together go.  
Moreover, who holds the King's heart (*entre nous*),  
Holds for the time his purse-strings too.  
So the Bishop murmured, "Great good, little harm";  
And turned to the lady, and offered his arm.

Over the rivers and valleys of France  
 The sun had cast his earliest glance  
 When, softly ensconced in his cushions deep,  
 My lord the Bishop at last sought sleep.  
 But the unkind god of slumber it seems  
 Did naught but grant him unquiet dreams:  
 Some confused, others clear; yet in all, to the fore  
 Rose the form and the face of la belle Léonore;  
 And ever a silken tassel hung  
 From her braceleted arm, and ever there clung  
 A beast thereunto: now a traitorous snake,  
 Now a swine she would lash, now a cur she would shake;  
 But whatever the guise (O God, grant us grace!)  
 The animal had the Bishop's face!

How he sought to cast off the vision's spell,  
 How he cursed her, a demon come from Hell,  
 Let none seek to know, and none hope to tell.  
 But most his heart sank when an Angel arose  
 And spake: "Her slave thou, wherever she goes;  
 Her slave, till thy dust returns unto dust,  
 Who traitor hast proved to the holiest trust.  
 Prostitute she of the body, 't is true;  
 But soul's prostitute is the worse of the two."

The Bishop awoke, his face ashen grey,  
And trembling he tore the curtains away.  
Across the great bed the sun's warm rays streamed;  
Cheerfully on the red velvet they gleamed.  
"It was a strange dream that I dreamed,"  
The Bishop, stretching his white arms, said;  
"The wine last night must have gone to my head."





PASSAGES FROM " ESTHER "

*THE following excerpts are from an unpublished play entitled ESTHER, whose plot, for the most part, follows closely along the lines of the biblical story, and whose very language is in places adapted from the speech of the biblical personages. In the first of the passages here printed, THE GOLDEN VASE, the attempt is made to depict the character of the Oriental despot Ahasuerus at the height of its overweening vanity, its subtle capriciousness, its resentful cruelty, and its power of splendid imagination. The first of these traits, again revealed in the scene entitled ESTHER AND THE KING, makes evident the danger incurred by Esther in later going unsummoned before Ahasuerus to plead for her people. In the last excerpt there are contrasted the characters of Mordecai, the finest type of the patriarchal Jew, and Haman, who dies as he has lived, a cunning and vindictive man.*

## THE GOLDEN VASE

[*A room in the palace. The KING is reclining on a couch, examining a golden vase. Near him stands HARBONA, the chamberlain.*]

THE KING (*angrily*)

Shall I be sport for workmen? Answer me!  
Shall clumsy artisans thus mutilate  
And with their damnèd chisels level down  
My great pre-eminence? Ay, answer me!  
Look now upon this little manikin,  
This figurine that holds these tiny reins,  
Whilst at his side a very charioteer  
Stands in all semblance equal. Look on this,  
And say, is this the King?

HARBONA (*examining the vase*)

My lord, be mild  
And patient with me, for indeed I see  
A battle with triumphant skill portrayed,  
And in the direst of the conflict you,

Our king and victor, brave beyond compare,  
To whom the lion is a cowering cur,  
And timid e'en the ravening wolf. Your car  
Doth overroll with strong relentless wheels  
The prostrate forms of seven enemies,  
And javelins fly, whilst you, unharmed, command.  
All doth appear with cunning art designed,  
Each man and beast in due proportion drawn.

THE KING (*mockingly*)

"In due proportion," disproportionate fool!  
Is it my due that such proportion reigns  
As shall endow a driven beast, this horse,  
With the appearance of a sturdier strength  
Than in the King's presentment doth inhere?  
And see this common soldier! Doth he not  
Ahasuerus in his height o'ertower?  
Nay, by this scurvy artist I am made  
A mock for piteous laughter!

HARBONA

Yet, great lord,  
He doth but follow nature, she who gives  
To all their form and stature, grace and strength,  
Among their fellow men of woman born.

## THE KING

This thought that you would bring for his excuse  
Doth all the more enrage me; it hath coursed  
A myriad times, a madness through my veins,  
Burning its path, like flood of living fire,  
And threatening my reason. That I, I,  
The ruler of all regions, should perforce  
Look up, look up, look up to statelier men,  
Or see the mighty muscle of a slave  
Outswell the moderate power of my arm  
As wind-filled sails of ships on Asian seas  
Excel in natural majesty the sheets  
Of puny barks beside our river banks!  
Shall my humiliation be set down,  
In metal graven, or on canvas kept,  
And I, whose spirit is divine, be shown  
Throughout the years, a man 'mongst other men?

## HARBONA

But hath not art, for all its servitors  
Firm laws of form and color, that do bring  
With their obedience beauty, but, transgressed,  
Condemn unto oblivion the o'erbold?

THE KING (*taking the vase again*)

Art hath no laws so great as is my will  
Which is the sum and substance of all law.  
You do forget that art exists for me,  
Not I for art. Be silent now, and hear  
How on this vase the prescient man had wrought  
With truest knowledge of his art's domain  
Ahasuerus. Here where soldiers swarm  
In clusters thick upon the wave of war  
My form had towered, resolute and firm,  
A mighty pillar. O'er the moving host  
My arm o'erstretched had covered multitudes  
Fearing its wrathful fall. Mine enemies  
Had in the shadow of each finger felt  
Oppression of eternal night, and groped  
Like sailors desolate in the sun's eclipse;  
While from mine eyes, whose circumscribèd size  
The largest Persian shield were small beside,  
Flashed forth to foe the flame of fiercest fire,  
But light of perfect hope unto mine own.  
My breast had heaved with triumph passionate  
And from my lips the eager breath rushed forth,  
A whirlwind scattering ruin. On my head  
The royal crown, with pearls and sapphires set,  
Had gleamed half lost in clouds, as if the gods

Were placing majesty upon my brow.—  
So had I filled all earth and reached to heaven;  
So had the artist wisely wrought my form  
More like my spirit.

*[He dashes the vase angrily across the room]*

But this cursèd dog  
Hath made of me a man like other men.

HARBONA

Forgive him, King, who blindly did blaspheme.

THE KING

Let him be blinded. Then will I forgive.  
Let him be blinded, Harbona. I would  
Not have him carve such images again.  
Go! I have said.

## ESTHER AND THE KING

### THE KING

Ah, my queen,  
How like a fragrant lily you are come  
To bless mine eyes with beauty's purity.

*[He kisses her]*

### ESTHER

Your graciousness bestows my grace on me.

### THE KING

Not so, sweet Esther. Does the wilding rose  
Whose orange petals perfume Nishapur,  
Or slender stalks of hyacinthine blue  
Thrusting their spikèd jewels in the air,—  
Do tulips riotous in color rich,  
And violets burdened with the soul of May,  
Gather in royal gardens deeper grace?



## ESTHER

With maiden lips unkissèd by the sun  
No bud could leap to perfect blossoming,  
But must in hidden beauty pass away.  
So I the gift to you the giver bring,  
As rivers bear their waters to the sea,  
Father of clouds whose rain hath fed the brooks.  
Take then my little all, and count its worth  
Poor in itself, yet rich in my desire  
Of good and greater good and greatest good  
For you, dear King, for you.

*[She kneels and kisses his hand]*

## THE KING

The words that dance upon your singing lips  
Have caught the wonder of your soul. They seem  
With supernatural harmony infused  
And form a part of your compelling charm.  
Now they are nymphs in loving bondage twined,  
Swaying in gracious unison to sounds  
Enchanted and enchanting. Now your words  
To my enamoured senses do appear  
A mystic garland plucked in Paradise  
And woven by some spirit of great peace  
Whose wings are rainbows.

## ESTHER

See, O dear my lord,  
How your own words outrun my halting tongue,  
So that now in comparison's fair light  
Your glowing praise doth dim that which it praises.  
As silence unto sound, as death to life,  
As nothing unto all, so does my speech  
Express the fulness of my love for you.  
My words are shadowy symbols of a sun  
Whose heat would burn the founts of language dry  
And make the greatest poet's head to bend  
In reverential silence.

## THE KING

All this love  
Called forth alone by me?

## ESTHER

By you alone.  
Ah, take this light of love which is my soul  
And use it as you will and while you will.  
It is to me a radiance of pure joy  
If you but value it. If not, dear lord,  
A burning heat within a barren heart.

## THE KING

Fear not my negligence. You are become  
Too sweet a portion, Esther, of my life  
For me to lose you now. Come sit by me  
And of your admiration strive to tell.

*[Esther seats herself on the divan beside the KING, who  
reclines]*

## ESTHER

I think you are most splendid of all kings.  
You have imagination more than gods  
And are to me the kindest amongst men.  
These all were reasons for my love, O King,  
Did not my love transcend all reasoning.  
Yet do I in your courage glory much  
And in your dreams hold revel with the stars,  
And shed for all your kindness grateful tears.

## THE KING

Dear Esther!

## ESTHER

Feel. My eyes are wet, O King.

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## THE KING

A little while ago, and I was wroth  
Because an artist made me to mine eyes  
Appear a man 'mongst men. Ah, sorceress,  
You have bewitched me in the magic ring  
Of love's enchanted ground, and I confess  
That, now, exultant with thrice-thrilling joy,  
I feel myself a mortal man, relieved  
Of lonely universal projects vast,  
And weightier far than this great crown of gold  
Which with both hands I lay aside. Ah, now  
I am a man beloved by a woman!

*[He takes her warmly in his arms]*

## ESTHER

Your words have poured a flood of ecstasy,  
Bathing my being in a perfect joy.  
At last the dreamed-of moment circles round  
And finds us here together, heart to heart,  
A man and woman, lover and beloved,  
Beloved and lover, equal in their love.

*[The KING puts her suddenly out of his arms, and  
takes up his crown.]*

THE KING (*angrily*)

Equal! Did you say "equal" unto me?  
That is a word I never thought to hear!

ESTHER

Oh pardon, King! My speech but followed out  
The path you carved for it. Your words were—

THE KING

Mine!

My words were mine! But what I of myself  
May choose to say, think you all others dare?  
In naught have I an equal, and in love,  
Which holds amongst the passions foremost place,  
As I the leader am of earth-born kings,  
There is most surely none who is my peer!

ESTHER

I kiss your hand, O master and my lord,  
And beg forgiveness, with an humble heart.

THE KING

Make unto this no second error then,  
And I do now forgive and now forget.

## THE DOWNFALL OF HAMAN

*[A public square in the City of Shushan. In the background stands a high gallows. As the curtain rises MORDECAI and THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS are revealed in the foreground. MORDECAI is clothed in a robe of linen and purple, covered by a cloak of blue and white. A crown of gold is on his head and golden chains almost cover his breast.]*

### MORDECAI

So Haman dies to-day. The wheel of fate  
Hath ta'en a mighty turn, sped by the hand  
Of favoring Jehovah. Here stand I  
Clad in the garment of nobility  
And weighty with much gold.

### THE CAPTAIN

Lord Mordecai,  
The King in honoring you but followeth  
The pointing of divinity's own hand  
And precedent august.

MORDECAI

What meaning here?

THE CAPTAIN

When coarsest sackcloth stung your agèd breast  
And in drab tatters hung where now clings gold  
In carvèd clusters, even then were you  
Clad in the garment of nobility;  
For through the raggedness there shone your soul,  
And weighty with much wisdom were your words.

MORDECAI

I think you speak not as a flatterer  
But as a friend. Sincerity doth make  
Your speech sonorous to my grateful ears.  
I thank you.

THE CAPTAIN

All of Shushan doth rejoice,  
Not I alone at your new dignities.

MORDECAI

But tell me,—for though generally I know  
These three days' happenings and Haman's fall,  
Yet have not heard from Esther's lips the whole,—  
Tell me now all, each slightest word, each act

That were enclosed within the fateful hour  
When trembling swayed upon a woman's tongue  
Judæa's destiny.

THE CAPTAIN

Thus it befell:

Ere the fourth dawn that followed your bold act  
Had from the bare sides of the neighboring hills  
Unwrapped the shadowy garment of the night,  
Esther, unbid, in royal vesture stood  
Revealed in azure veilings crystalline  
And glorious in fearless loveliness  
Before the astonished King. Death held his scythe  
Suspended in mid-air and motionless;  
Upon the flowing sands within his glass  
Time laid his aged hand, and they were still;  
Whilst Justice plucked the bandage from her eyes  
To gaze on Esther's beauty.

MORDECAI

You become  
A poet, soldier.

THE CAPTAIN

Verily, her deed  
And all its mystic setting make me so.  
For some there are, and of that number I,



Who, awe-struck, will past every doubting swear  
That while the King debated, and her life  
And all Judæa's in the balance hung,  
A rushing wind, as fearing to be late,  
Bore through the open gates, and brought to us  
The voice of distant thunder, and the voice  
With godlike accents fell upon our souls.

#### MORDECAI

Jehovah's was it, guardian of our race.  
Praised be his Holy Name!

#### THE CAPTAIN

The King's eyes leaped  
With sudden fire, and trembling held he out  
His golden sceptre unto Esther saved,  
And lovingly he spake these words to her:  
“What will you, Esther, what is your request?  
It shall be given to you though you ask  
The half of this my kingdom.”

#### MORDECAI

What said she?

#### THE CAPTAIN

She said: “If it seem good unto the King  
Let him and Haman come this very day

Unto the feast I have prepared for them.”  
And when they came, she bade them come once more  
Upon the morrow, and again they came.

#### MORDECAI

Now bid the spirit that doth hold the key,  
Throw open wide your gates of memory,  
For you have come unto the mighty hour  
That shall endure until all time be lost  
And our race ended with the whole world's end.

#### THE CAPTAIN

Each word that crossed the threshold of that door,  
Whereby I listening stood, hath found a niche  
Within my mind; nor have I aught forgotten,  
Nor shall I aught forget. Much wine they drank,  
The King and Haman, and with ardent eyes  
Ahasuerus gazed upon his Queen.  
Again said he to her: “What will you, Queen?  
It shall be given to you, though you ask  
The half of this my kingdom.” Esther spake:  
“If I have met with favor in your sight,  
And if it please the King, then let my life  
Be given me at my petitioning,  
And all my people's life at my request.  
For we are sold, I and my people sold,

To be destroyed, to perish, and be slain!  
But if we had been sold in bondage, I  
Had held my peace, although the adversary  
Could not have compensated to the King  
For damage of our loss. But he desires,  
Methinks, not only this most dread revenge  
Because a noble Jew, the Mordecai  
Who saved your life, would not bow down to him.  
His plan, 't would seem, aspires far more high.  
In the revulsion of the populace  
Against such ruthless act of your strong hand,  
He well may find a hopeful chance whereby  
Ahasuerus subtly to destroy,  
And wear himself that very golden crown  
Whereon Lord Haman looks."

Then spake the King:

"Who is he, and where is he, that doth dare  
So in his heart to do?" And Esther said:  
"An adversary and an enemy;  
Even this wicked Haman."

[*A messenger enters and after saluting gives a paper to THE CAPTAIN, who reads it. The messenger departs.*]

#### THE CAPTAIN

Soon he comes  
By soldiery surrounded to his death.

## MORDECAI

Make haste. I hunger for each syllable.

What said the King when Esther's speech found end?

## THE CAPTAIN

Like to a whirlwind rose he then in wrath,  
Like to a whirlwind when it grasps the waves,  
And twists them into mountains, while the sands  
Are hurled into the valleys of the sea.

His face most royally empurpled was  
With rage and wine. His eyes had tiger's glint,  
As unto him he thundered: "Is this true?"

## MORDECAI

How strove the snake to glide from out the net?

## THE CAPTAIN

His cunning fled him. Haman's cunning fled  
As flees a fawn when terror hath possessed it.  
With stricken eyes he stared upon the Queen,  
And, like a note upon a broken chord,  
His wailing voice was tremulous and thin.

## MORDECAI

No melody from an angelic harp,  
Nor any hymn of wingèd seraphim,

Than myriad roses making sweeter far  
The intermediate air, could bear to me  
Such perfect joy as Haman's broken voice  
When he, my people's brazen foe, at bay  
Stood, hopeless, in the presence of the King.  
How answered he Ahasuerus then?

#### THE CAPTAIN

As though fate bade him, Haman's words were these:  
"The fear of beauty falleth on my soul,  
And Esther's anger flaming from her eyes  
Doth so illumine them with God-like wrath  
That it well seems as if Jehovah's flame  
Were stored within those dark imperial orbs,  
Forth-leaping thence to scorch my trembling heart.  
Think not, Ahasuerus, that your wrath,  
Though it bespeaks the rage of countless men,  
Legions in myriad, swift to do your will,  
So overpowers and o'ermasters me  
As Esther's glance. You speak a nation's word  
And in your voice I hear a nation's tones  
Threatening destruction. Nor will I deny  
That I do fear you, though I do deny  
That I in aught am treacherous to you.  
Yet what availeth speech? Through Esther's lips  
God is demanding my deep punishment,

And from unrisen mists the future cries,  
Vengeance, vengeance, on Judæa's foe.  
But, queenly Esther, be now more than Queen;  
Be not the Jewess seeking for revenge.  
Ah, be a woman of whom years shall say:  
She saved her race by being true to it,  
And letting truth and beauty plead for it;  
She raised her race by being more than it,  
In loving mercy far exceeding it.  
Your race and you I would have wronged, O Esther,  
Yet show compassion even unto me  
And, by a mercy great as was my sin,  
Hide me from the King's anger, and erect  
A monument of glory to your people."

#### MORDECAI

What due reply gave then the Queen to him?

#### THE CAPTAIN

"No wall of pity that my words might build  
Could so surround your crime's most guilty sphere  
As to make hidden the o'ertopping growth  
Of cruel deeds your cruel will had led to.  
I judge you not by that which you have done,  
The letters to the satraps of the King  
And to the judges of his provinces

That yet must lead to bloodshed; and, more close  
To mine own heart, your plot 'gainst Mordecai.  
These I would now indeed forgive, O Haman,  
Because I am so happy in my love.  
Nor do I judge you by the issue dread  
Had not Ahasuerus heard my plea,  
With ear attuned to kindness and affection.  
The rude extermination of my tribe  
In these wide lands, the flow of children's blood,  
The anguished cry of nursing mothers, all  
The awful sounds and sights of furious war,  
The lasting sorrow in Judæan breasts,  
I might forgive, though all my racial blood  
Leaps in my veins with clamor for revenge,  
I might forgive, O Haman, ah, dear King,  
Because I am so happy in my love.  
Not, therefore, Haman, on what you have done,  
Or hoped to do, shall I in judgment stand.  
Thus far my mercy goes, led by my love.  
But I will judge by that which you would do  
Unto my people, Mordecai and me,  
Now, even now, if you all-powerful  
Should yet remain."

MORDECAI

And Haman answered?

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## THE CAPTAIN

“Queen

No harm I planned you.” Whereat Esther smiled  
And said unto him, “Knowing not my blood;  
But let that pass! What then of Mordecai,  
And of my people?” Haman hid his face,  
And said unto her, “All my enemies  
I now would pardon.” But she laughed aloud  
And scornful echoed, “Now would pardon, Haman?  
A twofold meaning lurks within your words.  
Now you would pardon, now that death waits near.  
But if that *now* should be a *now* of power  
How then, O Haman, would the Hebrews fare?  
Look in my eyes and answer.” Haman kept  
His visage hid, and answered, “They should be  
By me forgiven, and so Mordecai.”

## MORDECAI

How plucked she truth from lying lips?

## THE CAPTAIN

She spake:

“You looked not in mine eyes. Why looked you not?  
Is life, O Haman, worth thus low a lie?  
So proud a coward I have never seen  
Nor any noble so ignoble known.”



MORDECAI

And then?

THE CAPTAIN

With head erect Lord Haman spake:

“Nay, Esther, see I gaze upon your face,  
And thus make answer to your questioning.  
If Mordecai and all the Hebrew race  
Were now within my power, they should be  
By me forgiven—nay, I recall my words.  
I cannot look into those eyes and lie.”

MORDECAI

Jehovah's torch with truth invincible  
Had kindled them. Blessed be his Holy Name!

THE CAPTAIN

Then Esther slew him with her eyes, and spake:  
“Who hath no pity can no pity win.  
Hate begets hate. Your cruel heart, O Haman,  
Doth seal your cruel fate, whose ordering  
I leave unto the King.”

MORDECAI

A queenly speech,  
Most worthy of a daughter of the Law.

## THE CAPTAIN

Whereat the King, to gather time for thought,  
With angry step into the garden strode.  
There oleanders in warm fragrance bloomed  
Thrusting far forth upon the innocent air  
Great branches poisonous (so lurks at times  
Near beauty peril) laden with the freight  
Of white and crimson blossoms. While he paced,  
Contending with emotions yet opposed,  
(For much he leant upon his minister,)  
The life-imperilled Haman strove within  
To touch with pity Esther's burning heart.  
Where she reclinèd on a golden couch  
He knelt in supplication, nor refrained  
With anguished clutch to seize her garment's hem.  
The King returned, a sudden thunderbolt,  
Keen lightning in his eyes, and saw the twain  
With wine-enflamèd vision. "Ho," cried he,  
"Will he then force the Queen before my sight?  
Here in my house?" And as the word went forth  
I and my men with flashing swords rushed in,  
And covered Haman's face. "Let him be hanged,"  
Ahasuerus spake, "upon the gallows  
That he for Mordecai preparèd hath."

*[There is heard the fanfare of trumpets and the sound of  
approaching men.]*

## THE CAPTAIN.

They come with Haman. So the story ends.

*[Enter a group of soldiers with Haman in their centre. His hands are bound behind him. There follows a shouting rabble. Haman stops as he sees Mordecai, and sneers.]*

### HAMAN

Come you to gloat, old greybeard, ere I die?  
Even a jackal waiteth for the death,  
Ere, noiselessly as moonlight, he steals on.  
You Jews are beastlier than the very beasts!  
Or come you here to pluck from misery  
Sententious wisdom for your fellow-swine?  
It is a pastime that philosophers  
Most tenderly enjoy.

### MORDECAI

No bitter word  
Shall cross my lips against a dying man.  
Jehovah weighed you in his perfect scales,  
And found you wanting, and pronounced your doom.

### HAMAN

The victor easily may moralize  
And call good fortune by the name of justice.

I hear your smooth old tongue roll oily phrase  
Unto admiring auditors: "Behold  
Where once the wicked Haman strode in pomp,  
Whilst I, most ragged, waited at the gate;  
But here in purple him in chains I saw.  
So virtue triumphs, vice is punishèd."  
Bah! How I scorn you, good Lord Mordecai

MORDECAI

If scorning gives you courage, you are welcome.

HAMAN

But though upon your withered finger gleams  
The ring authoritative which to me  
Ahasuerus gave, then took away,  
Still are you doomed to death, beyond reprieve,  
You and your cursèd kinsmen, one and all.  
For what the Persian King hath once decreed  
Is not reversible, but like time's stream  
Proceeds unchecked, irrevocable law;  
And what he hath already signed, endures;  
And though I die, Judæa is destroyed.

MORDECAI

The kindly solace of this cruel thought  
I must deny you, Haman, for the King

Hath since been pleased to grant and to command  
The Jews be warned, and be allowed to stand  
In groups defensive throughout all the land,  
To slay, destroy and cause to perish all  
That would assault or take the spoil of them  
On Adar's thirteenth day. Thus are they saved.  
The glowing ardor of the King's decree  
Hath caused my fear for them to melt away  
As mist dissolves, pierced by the radiant arrows  
Shot from the glorious quiver of the sun.

#### HAMAN

So, for the present, vengeance hath escaped me.  
My life, a barren tree, sinks fruitless down  
To all-begetting, all-entombing earth.  
The siren shadows lure me to their arms.  
Soon shall the flutter of a moth's soft wing,  
The locust's buzz in silent summer nights,  
Be of more import to the living world  
Than Haman, erstwhile master of this realm.  
Yet ere I go, mark this, Lord Mordecai:  
Though all my plans have vanished like pale dreams,  
Yet shall your hated race, at other hands  
More powerful than mine, in other climes,  
Suffer the stroke of persecution's lash,  
Revilement's keen abuse, the harsh decree

Of envious legislation, and much woe.  
Undoubting this do I go down to death,  
And this undoubting, thus far comforted.

MORDECAI

God's will be done! But we with steadfast gaze  
Shall face the future, howsoe'er it come.



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